

WHAT IS CLAIMED IS:

1. A method of creating network printer ports on a computer workstation, said computer workstation having an operating system that includes a print subsystem, comprising the steps of:

providing a network;

5 communicatively coupling said computer workstation to said network;

communicatively coupling at least one printer to said network;

said computer workstation performing the steps of:

transmitting a discovery packet to which a first printer of a designated type can respond;

10 receiving a response packet from said first printer, said response packet including printer-specific network information of said first printer;

identifying whether a network port exists for said first printer; and

15 if no such network port exists, then creating a first network printer port for said first printer based on said printer-specific network information for said first printer.

2. The method of claim 1, further comprising the steps of initializing a port monitor upon a loading of said print subsystem, said port monitor performing each of said transmitting step, said receiving step and said identifying step.

3. The method of claim 2, wherein said operating system is a Windows operating system.

4. The method of claim 3, wherein said Windows operating system includes a print spooler for initializing said port monitor and for performing said creating step.

5. The method of claim 4, wherein said print spooler receives said printer-specific network information for said first printer from said port monitor.

6. The method of claim 1, wherein said printer-specific network information includes a TCP/IP address of said first printer and a MAC address of said first printer.

7. The method of claim 1, wherein said discovery packet is a propriety broadcast message to which only a printer of said designated type on said network will respond.

8. A computer program for automatically creating network printer ports on a computer workstation coupled to a network, said computer program including instructions for performing the steps of:

- transmitting a discovery packet to which a printer of a designated type coupled
5 to said network can respond;
- receiving a response packet from said printer thereby identifying said printer as being of said designated type, said response packet including printer-specific network information of said printer;
- identifying whether a network port exists on said computer workstation for
10 said printer; and
- if no such network port exists, then, creating a first network printer port for said printer based on said printer-specific network information for said printer.

9. The method of claim 8, wherein said printer-specific network information includes a TCP/IP address of said printer and a MAC address of said printer.

10. A method of automatically creating a network printer port on a workstation connected to a network, comprising the steps of:

- providing a Windows operating system at said workstation, said Windows operating system including a print subsystem;
- 5 providing a Windows print spooler at said workstation having an Add Port mechanism;
- providing a port monitor at said workstation;
- invoking said Windows print spooler to initialize said port monitor; and
- upon initialization of said port monitor, said port monitor sending a
10 proprietary broadcast message to which each printer of a designated type on said network can respond, said each printer of said designated type responding to said proprietary broadcast message with a unique data packet including printer-specific network information;

said port monitor receiving said printer-specific network information; and
15 for each identified printer of said designated type for which no port exists, said
port monitor invoking said Add Port mechanism of said Windows print spooler, and
thereafter,

said port monitor passing said printer-specific network information to said
Windows print spooler for creation of said network printer port on said workstation.
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11. The method of claim 10, wherein said printer-specific network
information includes at least one of a TCP/IP address and a MAC address.

12. The method of claim 10, wherein the step of invoking said Windows print
spooler to initialize said port monitor occurs when said print subsystem is loaded by
said workstation.